



Montana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

an affiliate of the  
**eat right.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

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SENATE

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Exhibit No. 8

Date 2/16/2015

Bill No. SB 206

February 16, 2015

Chairman Fred Thomas and  
Members of the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee

My name is Katie Bark, and I am a registered dietitian from Bozeman. As President of the Montana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, I am representing 300 registered dietitians who work in a variety of settings, (health care, foodservice, community, education, schools and early childhood) to provide services to Montanans to help them optimize their health through food and nutrition. As licensed nutritionists, we base our recommendations on science-based strategies tailored to the individual needs of our clients or target audience.

We strongly oppose SB 206 and ask you to vote no on this bill for the following reasons.

- 1) Restricting food purchases of SNAP recipients to WIC foods is inappropriate and impractical. The WIC Food Package is designed for a very specific population (postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5). Therefore, it would be inappropriate to generalize to all SNAP recipients. A healthy diet is based on a variety of foods and SNAP benefits should allow Montanans to choose foods that support their own health needs and food preferences. As you know, many individuals (1 in every thirteen children) suffer from a food allergy or intolerance, thus food selection should allow flexibility and individual choice.
- 2) Through the provisions suggested in this bill (photo ID, restricting eligibility and time limits) it could further decrease food access to needy Montana families and adults, including seniors and veterans. When you consider that 55% of SNAP recipients are seniors and children and another 22% of them are individuals with disabilities. – That makes up over three-quarters or the majority of SNAP recipients (77%) that are at risk of food insecurity. These Montanans deserve access to food that is essential for growth, development, treatment for a health condition and general well-being. This bill isn't reflective of what we as Montanans value- All Montanans deserve the right to have food on their table.
- 3) As nutritionists, we appreciate the sponsor's, Senator Thomas, implied interest in helping Montanans make healthful choices. With obesity rates being 25% of adults in Montana, (one in four people in this room) we agree that many Montanans' food choices have room for improvement. Since many of our most costly diet and obesity related diseases (diabetes, hypertension), are linked to high health care costs, the time is right to support Montana families in making healthier choices. However, we feel that the method of restriction is misguided. We see Montanans every day wanting to make healthful choices but are often



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faced with tough decisions in purchasing foods they can afford and at the same time fill up their children's tummies. Unfortunately, often time due to the high cost of lean beef, fruits and vegetables, clients have to choose high carbohydrate processed foods. Have you ever tried to eat healthfully when staying to a SNAP allowance of \$3.76 (based on \$113/month for one SNAP client) per day?

We encourage you to add a provision that enhances nutrition education for SNAP clients or increases access to fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, especially from Montana farms and ranches. Did you know that Montana is the largest producer of lentils which are a nutrition powerhouse in terms of protein, fiber, iron and are essentially fat-free? They are inexpensive and nutritious but do you see any of your peers eating them in the Capitol restaurant? We would welcome the opportunity to work with you on creating an effective nutrition education campaign to motivate all Montanans to make healthier choices. At the same time, we encourage you to expand SNAP Education Programs, Career and Technical Education or Farm to School Programs that teach adults and children about nutrition, to prepare tasty healthful recipes, food budgeting, and Montana agriculture.

We strongly urge you to vote No on SB 206. Thank you for your service to our great state of Montana.

Sincerely,

Katie Bark, RD, LN, President

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